

HUMAN RIGHTS SUMMARY

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HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS: SOUTHERN CONE REACTION

SOURCES: (NUMEROUS AND ATTACHED)

Government's in Latin America's Southern Cone have reacted less stridently to the State Department's human rights reports than in past years. Officials continue to object strongly to the concept of a foreign government publishing reports on what they view as domestic matters. As to the substance of the reports, the reactions have varied from attempts essentially to ignore their existence (Brazil) to implicit approval and full media publication of the text (Argentina).

The Argentine reaction must be viewed in the context of (1) the recent attempt to improve bilateral understanding through the visit to Buenos Aires of a presidential ~~emissary~~ emissary, General Andrew Goodpaster; and (2) the highly negative Argentine reaction to the IAHRC's draft report and the expectation that the US report would be another stiff dose of the same bitter medicine.

Upon reading the report, however, President Videla decided to have it immediately translated and published in all newspapers. He was reportedly surprised that the report carefully established the historical context for events of the recent past and took note of the human rights progress made in 1979. Embassy soundings among government officials and military officers reveal that many share Videla's assessment of the report as a balanced, objective statement that, despite some faults, provides hope for improvement in bilateral relations.

A protest note handed to Ambassador Castro by the Foreign Ministry on February 7 (after media publication of the report had been ordered) and a communique issued by the Presidency on February 8 (after the Ambassador was sent an advance copy) contained the predictable references to interference in Argentine affairs. They were, however, largely for domestic consumption. Videla went out of his way to assure Ambassador Castro that the Foreign Ministry's reference to a deterioration in bilateral relations was not

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/HR/WFO

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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Exemption(s):

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Date Declassify on Reason

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sanctioned by the presidency and that Videla does not want contention over the report ~~that~~ that would disrupt efforts to improve bilateral contacts.

Human rights groups in Buenos Aires are also pleased with the report, finding it an accurate, precise, and balanced statement. They were particularly pleased to see the abuses attributed directly to members of the Argentine security forces.

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